Indiana and the Election of 1864

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The election of Abraham Lincoln in 1864 hinged to a large extent on the fact that the Union party was able to carry the October elections in Ohio, Indiana, and Pennsylvania. It was generally felt that whichever party carried the October elections in these three states would also carry the national election in November; therefore, both parties concentrated most of their attention on achieving victory in these states in October.1 For a long time the outcome of the October election in Indiana was in doubt. Almost until the very eve of the election Governor Oliver P. Morton was not optimistic about his party's chances of success. One correspondent wrote from Evansville to Andrew Johnson, the vice-presidential nominee of the Union party, that "Indiana may be as troublesome to Lincoln as South Carolina."

In view of this fact, the presidential election of 1864 in Indiana may be deserving of closer investigation.

Early in 1864, the suggestion that Lincoln should be renominated was being considered by a large number of people. The Unionists in Indiana were divided in their opinion as to the desirability of renominating him. The largest group was of the opinion that Lincoln's record had been good enough to warrant permitting him to continue in office for another term. This group was extremely enthusiastic for him and induced a number of Union journals in Indiana to declare for his renomination early in the year.3

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2 S. Fletcher to A. Johnson, July 30, 1864, Andrew Johnson MSS.

3 La Porte, Indiana, Herald, January 2, 1864; Madison, Indiana, Courier, January 11, 1864; Greencastle, Indiana, Putnam Republican Banner, January 21, 1864; Vincennes, Indiana, Gazette, January 30, 1864; Terre Haute, Indiana, Wabash Express, January 20, 1864; Mishawaka, Indiana, Enterprise, January 23, 1864. These are some of the
Some of Lincoln's friends even suggested that the national convention should be dispensed with and that he should be nominated by acclamation. The popular feeling toward Lincoln in Indiana in January and February is typical of the feeling everywhere. This great outpouring of affection for the president was spontaneous and legitimate. Among this group which preferred Lincoln were many who refused to come out openly for him until after the Baltimore convention had officially nominated him. These men wished to be in a position to support the nominee, whoever he might be, without having made any previous commitments.

There was another group in Indiana and throughout the nation who were openly hostile to Lincoln's renomination. These men were the radicals of the Union party. To them Lincoln appeared to be everything from an incompetent to an "awful, woeful ass." In their opinion he lacked exec-

papers which came out for Lincoln early in the year. See also Win-
fred A. Harbison, "Indiana Republicans and the Re-election of Presi-

Indianapolis, Indiana, Daily Journal, January 16, February 27, 1864; Indianapolis, Indiana, Daily Gazette, January 25, 1864; J. J. Pease to G. Welles, February 11, 1864, Gideon Welles MSS, Library of Congress. Pease stated that Lincoln was so popular in the Northwest that the national convention should be abandoned.


M. Halstead to J. Sherman, February 8, 1863, John Sherman MSS, Library of Congress. Halstead's remark in full was: "If Lin-
coln was not a damned fool, we could get along yet. He is an awful, woeful ass." For some other evidence of the hatred which the radicals felt for Lincoln see T. Harry Williams, Lincoln and the Radicals (Madison, Wisconsin, 1941), 306-333; Briggs to S. Chase, October 17, 1863; T. Stevens to S. Chase, October 8, 1863, Salmon P. Chase MSS; H. Barber to L. Trumbull, October 30, 1863; G. T. Brown to L. Trumbull, November 12, 1863, Lyman Trumbull MSS.
tive ability. He was too slow in forming an emancipation policy, and he was too lenient in his attitude toward the South. These men wanted an executive who would crush the rebellion without having any qualms as to the methods employed. They could not see how or why Lincoln was popular with the people. Some dismissed his popularity by saying that it came from the "unthinking masses" or was "only on the surface." Some of the radicals were aware that the popular approval of Lincoln was genuine. One of them pointed out that "five out of six people of the west—Ohio and Indiana especially—[were] enthusiastically in favor of the renomination of Mr. Lincoln." These radicals knew that the movement for Lincoln was "spontaneous beyond the possibility of a doubt," but so great was their hatred for him that they were willing to disregard the obvious will of the people by trying to delay the convention in the hope that Lincoln's popularity would abate, and they could substitute a more radical nominee.

The only difficulty with this group was that they could not agree on a likely man to succeed Lincoln. Many of the states had their favorite son whom they would have liked to see nominated. At other times the radicals suggested men of national prominence. Generals Benjamin F. Butler, William S. Rosecrans, John C. Frémont, and Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase were the ones most frequently mentioned. Of these men the only two who received much attention in Indiana were Frémont and Chase.

Frémont was supported by the German radicals in Indiana. Their organ, the *Indiana Freie Presse*, wrote, "We cannot and dare not vote for Lincoln unless we are willing to disregard the obvious will of the people by trying to delay the convention in the hope that Lincoln's popularity would abate, and they could substitute a more radical nominee."

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9 W. D. Bickham to J. Sherman, March 1, 1864, John Sherman MSS.

to participate in the betrayal of the republic...."
Until Frémont withdrew from the race in September, the Germans continued to give him their full support and greatly embarrassed Lincoln's administration by their actions.12

The Chase boom was to reach far greater proportions. The Secretary had been working since 1862 to build an organization to carry him to the position which he felt he was born to fill. He used the great patronage of his department for this purpose and also attempted to sell himself to the American public through the propaganda agencies which Jay Cooke had set up to sell government bonds.13 In October, 1863, Chase visited Indianapolis. He spent some time exchanging compliments with Governor Morton and then made a bid for the Governor's support by offering him the secretaryship of state.14 Morton, however, was unwilling to endanger his own position by becoming involved in a political venture which was as precarious as Chase's candidacy.

About the same time that Chase was making his bid for Morton's support, the Governor was also being considered by Indiana politicians for the nomination. Once again he refused to consider such talk. He probably felt that the Indiana politicians and others were merely using him in their effort to prevent the Union State Convention from declaring for Lincoln. The Governor tried to silence this talk in December, but Indiana newspapers continued to mention him as a possible nominee until February.15 The withdrawal of the Governor from the race in December greatly spurred the Chase boom in Indiana. General Henry B. Carrington wrote to Chase from Indianapolis that it was definitely settled that Morton would run for governor.

13 Albert B. Hart, Salmon Portland Chase (Boston, 1899), 309; Ellis P. Oberholtzer, Jay Cooke, Financier of the Civil War (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1907), I, 360-361; Donna1 V. Smith, Chase and Civil War Politics (Columbus, Ohio, 1931), 83-88.
and “not in the Presidential canvass.” The letter continued with some welcome news for the Secretary. “Several who spoke for you as a cabinet officer; but claimed for Indiana a Presidential candidate, now that Indiana politics promise to require attention under Gov. Morton as the local leader, give full expression to a choice of yourself.”

The Chase treasury agents increased their activities in Indiana, and Chase also sought to induce Indiana’s two leading congressmen, George Julian and Schuyler Colfax to support him. Julian was offered a position on the Chase Central Committee. Julian was a radical and probably preferred Chase, but he was unwilling to identify himself with a movement which he knew was not popular with the people. He declined Chase’s offer and confided in his journal that Chase was undoubtedly a victim of an “overweening ambition” and that it was better to “let the presidential matter drift.” Colfax also declined to identify himself with the Chase movement, and when the rumor began to spread in Washington that he was about to come out for Chase, Colfax quickly went to Lincoln to deny it.

The Union men in each county met on February 13 to elect delegates to the state convention. The resolutions adopted at these preliminary meetings left no doubt as to the popular preference for the governorship, but unfortunately the interference of the Chase men and the Germans prevented any clear-cut picture being obtained on the presidential question. Consequently, when the state convention met, this matter was still in doubt. Even Governor Morton was noncommittal on the presidential matter. He claimed that a declaration for Lincoln so early in the year might be

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16 H. B. Carrington to S. Chase, December 12, 1863, Salmon P. Chase MSS.
17 Nicolay and Hay, Abraham Lincoln: A History, VIII, 323; H. J. Rudisill to S. Chase, February 2, 1864, Salmon P. Chase MSS. Both references tell of the activity of the treasury agents in Indiana on behalf of Chase’s candidacy.
18 George W. Julian, Political Recollections, 1850 to 1872 (Chicago, 1884), 237-238; Grace J. Clarke, George W. Julian, in Indiana Historical Collections (Indianapolis, Indiana, 1916- ), XI (1923), 250-251. The journal entry is dated February 16, 1864.
19 Nicolay and Hay, Abraham Lincoln: A History, VIII, 315. Lincoln received a full report of Chase’s efforts to obtain the nomination for the presidency from W. A. Bradshaw, J. H. Jordan to S. Chase, May 1, 1864; J. Fishback to S. Chase, April 11, 1864, Salmon P. Chase MSS.
“premature.” This became the stock argument of all those who opposed a declaration in favor of Lincoln by the state convention.

When the Union State Convention assembled at Indianapolis on February 23, the Lincoln men were ready to place their state in favor of his renomination. At the very opening of the convention after the temporary organization had been completed, Cyrus M. Allen ascended the platform and introduced a resolution which proposed that Governor Morton be renominated by acclamation and that the delegates to the national convention be instructed for Lincoln. The opposition had not anticipated such a move, and before they could recover their equilibrium the convention had adopted the resolution amid a tremendous outburst of enthusiasm. The Germans attempted to get a resolution adopted declaring that the delegates to the national convention should be “perfectly free and untrammeled” as far as any commitments on the presidency were concerned. The Lincoln men were too strong and quickly overruled the Germans.

After this excitement had subsided the permanent organization was completed and Joseph A. Wright, a former governor, was made presiding officer. Governor Morton then came forward to deliver the keynote address. Most of his speech was devoted to a defense of his administration and to a recapitulation of the affairs of the state during the past year. Many times he digressed from this to launch thrusts at the Democrats in Indiana whom he denounced as little better than partisans of Jefferson Davis. After disposing of local matters, the Governor devoted himself to the broader arena of national politics. He skilfully avoided all references to the troublesome questions of the presidency and reconstruction and directed his chief attention at attacking the peace men who were endangering the country. He closed his speech with a magnificent tribute to the Indiana soldiers and said he would refuse to sanction any party or program, either state or national, which would lead to the

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20 Foulke, Life of Oliver P. Morton, I, 292-293; Harbison, “Indiana Republicans and the Re-election of President Lincoln,” Indiana Magazine of History, XXXIV, 52; B. F. Tuttle to S. Chase, February 5, 1864, Salmon P. Chase MSS.

21 Indianapolis, Indiana, Daily Journal, Indianapolis, Indiana, Daily State Sentinel, and Indianapolis, Indiana, Daily Gazette, February 23, 1864; H. B. Carrington to S. Chase, February 27, 1864, Salmon P. Chase MSS.
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...dismemberment of the Union or to a dishonorable peace. Thus having identified himself and his party on the side of loyalty and the Union, Morton left the platform amid a tremendous outburst of cheering.22

The convention then proceeded to the adoption of the state platform. One resolution called for the renomination of Lincoln because they regarded “his re-election to the position he now occupies as essential to the speedy and triumphant end of the war.” The delegates to the national convention were instructed to vote for him. Two other resolutions declared in favor of Oliver P. Morton for the governorship and Andrew Johnson for the vice-presidential nomination. The platform further declared for the “full and complete restoration of the just authority of the Union under the Constitution of the United States.” The soldiers were thanked, and resolution three declared that anyone who opposed the government, denounced its acts, refused to give it financial support, or who organized secret societies to resist its laws was rendering the “rebel cause more effective support than if they joined the rebel armies.”23 Presumably this was directed at the Democrats. The convention continued in session throughout the afternoon. Candidates for state offices were selected, as well as delegates to the national convention, state electors, and a new state central committee.

After the state convention adjourned, the internecine strife broke out afresh in the Union party. The Germans were angry because of the Allen resolution and threatened to bolt the party. Even the Indianapolis Journal deplored the action of the Lincoln men at the convention and censured them for having rushed into the field too early. By early March, however, the editor of the Journal had to admit that further opposition to Lincoln was futile because of his great popularity.24

The Indianapolis Gazette continued to advance Salmon

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22 Indianapolis, Indiana, Daily Journal, February 24, 1864. During the adoption of the Allen resolution Wright made a short speech in favor of Lincoln and called him “the man for the times, above all living men.”


24 H. B. Carrington to S. Chase, February 27, 1864, Salmon P. Chase MSS; Indianapolis, Indiana, Daily Journal, February 27, March 10, 1864.
Chase's cause. The paper protested against the action of the Lincoln men at the convention, and it insisted that he had merely ridden in on the coattails of Morton, who was so popular with the delegates that anyone associated with his name would have been endorsed for the presidency. Its opposition to Lincoln did not cease until after he was nominated at Baltimore, but even then the editor qualified his support by demanding that Lincoln should change his cabinet. Now it could no longer disregard the wishes of the people by supporting Chase. In a letter to Chase the editor claimed that ever since the state convention had declared for Lincoln the Gazette was losing money. He added that if Chase still wished to have a paper in Indiana he would have to bolster its finances with some government advertising. By this time, however, the Chase boom had died to a faint echo and apparently no financial help was extended.

The declaration of the Indiana Union State Convention for Lincoln on February 23 was followed by a similar declaration from a caucus of Union members of the Ohio legislature. Here again the Chase men were caught unprepared. No general invitation or announcement of the proposed caucus had been made. The Chase men learned of the meeting quite by accident, and when they hurried to the chamber they found only sixty-five of the one hundred and nine Union members of the assembly present. James R. Hubbell, Columbus Delano, and John M. Connell directed the Lincoln resolution. The Chase men tried to prevent its adoption and left the meeting when they realized this could not be done. The resolution was then adopted even though there was not a majority of the members present.

After the Ohio legislature and the Indiana state convention had declared for Lincoln the Chase boom was finished. Early in March, Chase announced that in view of the action in Ohio he could no longer permit his name to be used. Chase probably still hoped, however, that the

26 Indianapolis, Indiana, Daily Gazette, February 24, May 31, 1864; R. F. Tuttle to S. Chase, February 24, 1864; J. F. Jordan to S. Chase, March 12, 1864, Salmon P. Chase MSS.
26 J. C. Hall to S. Chase, March 2, 1864; R. C. Parsons to S. Chase, March 2, 1864, Salmon P. Chase MSS; Cincinnati, Ohio, Daily Commercial, February 27, 1864. Hall and Parsons give a full account of the incident.
American people would realize his superiority and call him
to the presidency.27

The radical Germans presented a more serious prob-
lem. They not only objected to the declaration for Lincoln
but also felt that they had been slighted in the matter of
the state nominations. In order to pacify them General
Nathan Kimball suddenly declared that he could not accept
the nomination for the lieutenant-governorship, and the Un-
ion Central Committee conveniently chose the German
leader, Conrad Baker, to replace him. Many Germans were
still unsatisfied. They met with a few other malcontents
at Indianapolis and selected delegates to the Cleveland con-
vention which was to be held May 31. At Cleveland, Gen-
eral Frémont was nominated upon a platform which was
quite satisfactory to the radicals. It called for the confisca-
tion of rebel property. For many months Julian had been
urging a confiscation bill in Congress to provide land for
homesteads for veterans and Negroes in the South. He re-
used to support Frémont, however, especially after the Gen-
eral repudiated the confiscation plank in his letter of accept-
ance. The prevailing public opinion in Indiana was against
any move which would endanger party solidarity. The Fré-
mont nomination was not generally well received throughout
the state.28

The following week the Union National Convention
assembled at Baltimore and nominated Lincoln and Johnson.
The platform was acceptable to most Indiana Unionists, al-
though as in the case of the state platform it dodged the
major issues of the war. The platform called for the abol-
ition of slavery by constitutional amendment and was hailed
by the Indianapolis Journal as the most fatal blow thus far
struck against the Confederacy.29 Julian was disappointed

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28 Indianapolis, Indiana, Daily Gazette, April 18, 27, 1864; Indi-
anapolis, Daily Journal, April 27, May 24, 1864; Clarke, George W.
Julian, 252-257; Congressional Globe, 38 Cong., 1 Sess., 1185.

29 Indianapolis, Indiana, Daily Journal, June 10, 1864. It is inter-
esting to note that on the very eve of the Baltimore convention Lincoln
was doubtful that he would receive the nomination. Alexander K.
that the platform did not endorse his confiscation plan. Such a plank had been approved by the subcommittee on resolutions but had been defeated in the full committee by the efforts of McKee Dunn of Indiana. Julian was also sorry that Johnson was nominated. The Congressman felt that Johnson did not subscribe to the principles embodied in the platform, and that since he came from Tennessee he did not "reside in the United States." Nevertheless, Julian was an effective campaigner in the canvass until illness forced him to withdraw.

A great ratification meeting was held at Indianapolis on June 11. Morton was the principal speaker. He lauded the convention for having nominated Lincoln and Johnson and called upon the Germans to support them. He attacked Frémont and insisted that his letter of acceptance of the Cleveland nomination could have been written and subscribed to by Clement Vallandigham, the leader of the detested Copperheads. Meetings were held all over the state in the most important cities to endorse the nominations. Considerable popular enthusiasm was manifested in most cases. With the exception of a few "soreheads" the Unionists closed their ranks and prepared for the canvass.

The enthusiasm manifested during the ratification meetings was short-lived, for within a few weeks after the convention the nation was plunged into a period of deep gloom. This period of despair lasted until the first week in September. During this period objections to Lincoln increased and a movement began to force his withdrawal from the nomination. By August, Lincoln himself despaired of all pros-

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McClure, Our Presidents and How We Make Them (New York, 1900), 184; Abram J. Dittenhoefer, How We Elected Lincoln (New York, 1916), 77, 80-81.

20 Julian, Political Recollections, 243; Clarke, George W. Julian, 257-259.


pects for re-election and in a sealed document he pledged himself to support his successor after the election. The despondency which seized the Unionists is reflected in the apathy of their canvass during the summer. The party leaders reopened the old internal bickerings, and the jubilant Democrats carefully postponed their convention until late in August so that they would be better able to capitalize on their opponents' misfortunes.

There were two reasons why the country passed through this period of gloom during the summer months. The first reason was the unpropitious military situation. The great armies massed under Grant and Sherman in May had aroused the confident expectation that the war was rapidly entering its final phase. By June 19, Grant's army had sustained heavy losses and was confronting Robert E. Lee, who was entrenched behind seemingly impregnable fortifications at Petersburg. On June 27, William T. Sherman had been stopped at Kennesaw Mountain and the wily Joseph E. Johnston was preparing to hold him in check from behind his elaborate entrenchments at Atlanta. Instead of ending in sudden victory the war seemed to be quickly turning into a long, bloody war of attrition. At the same moment General Jubal Early's column made a raid into Maryland and reached the very outskirts of Washington. That such offensive power could still be mustered by a Confederacy which they had been told was tottering on the brink of disaster came as a shock and a surprise to the people of the North. They invariably blamed the administration for these difficulties.

Accompanying these defeats came a strong peace sentiment which swept over the whole North. The peace extremists in the Democratic party were quick to take advan-

tage of this sentiment and began holding mass meetings in nearly every town of importance. In Indiana, Harrison H. Dodd, Commander of the Sons of Liberty and a leader in the peace party, spoke before a meeting in Hendricks County. He proposed the immediate creation of a Northwest Confederacy and threatened civil war if the administration attempted in any way to interfere with the activities of the Democratic party in the state.  

The second factor which led to the period of despondency also grew out of the military situation. The defeats in May and June necessitated the issuing on July 19, 1864, of a proclamation calling for an additional five hundred thousand troops, all deficiencies on each state's quota to be made good by a draft on September 5. Governor Morton was alarmed at the reaction to this announcement in Indiana. The prospects of a draft on the very eve of the state election greatly diminished Morton's chances of re-election. The people were shocked to learn of the heavy losses in the army, and the announcement of a new call convinced them that the losses were even greater than had been reported. The Democratic leaders did not lose this golden opportunity to show the incompetence of an administration that threw away lives so recklessly and then blandly asked for another half million. They threatened that any attempts to enforce a draft in Indiana would be met with violence.

Morton's past experience with enlistment in his state proved that this was no idle threat. On October 17, 1863, the government had issued a call for three hundred thousand volunteers; drafting to fill deficiencies was to begin January 5, 1864. The original call was amended twice until when finally issued on March 15, 1864, a total of seven hundred thousand troops were requested, all deficiencies to be met by conscription on April 15. At that time General Carrington had announced in Indianapolis that these troops would be sufficient for all purposes and that the war would be over by the end of the year. Morton had been able to

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34 Indianapolis, Indiana, Daily State Sentinel, June 27, 1864.
35 The Union papers in Indiana tried to show that the new call was necessary to replace the three-year veterans whose enlistments were to expire. See ibid., July 28, 1864. Indiana's quota of troops was 25,662. The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (10 vols., Washington, 1880-1901), Series 3, IV (1909), 515-516.
raise Indiana's quota, although some local districts were in arrears. When Washington suggested that a draft should be held in these districts, Morton refused to comply. He pointed out that his state as a whole had furnished an excess above all calls. Thus Indiana escaped the draft early in 1864.

In April, 1864, Morton and his fellow governors of Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa consulted together and agreed to raise eighty-five thousand one-hundred-day volunteers for routine duties behind the lines so that troops could be released to deliver the coup de grâce to the Confederacy. On April 21, Lincoln and Edwin M. Stanton accepted this offer, although they misconstrued the number as one hundred thousand. Indiana's quota was set at twenty thousand.

Morton made every effort to raise these volunteers, but in the end he was unsuccessful. The Democrats insisted there was no reason why Indiana should supply additional troops when the eastern states were in arrears. Even the Union papers were not enthusiastic about the calling of volunteers. On May 5, the Journal wrote that the plan was a failure, and by the end of the month it was obvious that the quota would never be met. The state was still nearly twelve thousand five hundred short of its goal. General Conrad Baker wrote to Washington that Morton had reached the conclusion that no more volunteers could be expected from Indiana. "The Governor says that if more men are required they must be drafted; that it will be impossible to procure volunteers, and that it would be injurious to make the effort and fail in it. I think the difficulty of procuring volunteers, even for the 100-days' service, shows that he is right in this opinion."

Indiana, Wisconsin, and Iowa failed to meet their quotas of one-hundred-day volunteers. The people had lost their fervor for enlisting, and on the basis of this experience in

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37 The War of the Rebellion, Series 3, IV, 237-240, 262, 264, 280-283, 385, 406, 412, 413, 417. The Democrats claimed that Morton had objected to a longer term of service because he wanted to have the troops back in time to vote or to intimidate Democrats at the polls. Indianapolis, Indiana, Daily State Sentinel, April 25, 26, 29, 1864.


April and May, Morton was convinced that the new call in July could never be filled except by conscription. The Democrats were in an excellent position to capitalize on the situation which prevailed during the summer months, but unfortunately their party was nearly as badly divided as the Union party had been. There were three factions in the Democratic party: the war Democrats, who approved of a policy of all-out effort for victory; the peace Democrats, who demanded an immediate cessation of hostilities and peace even at the cost of the Union. In Indiana this group was led by Harrison B. Dodd. The third group was the moderate group. They were numerically superior to the other two. They wanted peace as soon as possible, but they were unwilling to accept it on any basis other than "the union as it was and the constitution as it is." They disliked Lincoln because of his disregard for civil liberty and his violations of the constitution.

In Indiana as in the other states the military situation in July gave special impetus to the peace element, who although they were few in number were especially noisy. Lambdin P. Milligan was their choice for the gubernatorial nomination. In a public declaration he went on record as being in favor of disunion rather than to continue a war which was menacing liberty and reducing his people to a "state of pecuniary vassalage" to the East.40

The Democratic county conventions refused to accept the leadership of the peace men and adopted resolutions in favor of the continuation of the war until the Union was restored. Their chief objection to the administration was that its actions were unconstitutional, and that it had not prosecuted the war successfully enough. In looking forward to the national convention many of the county meetings urged that the party go into the canvass on a war platform with General George B. McClellan as the nominee.41

On July 12, the Democratic State Convention met at Indianapolis. The meeting was entirely in the hands of the moderates, who promptly proceeded to elect David Turpie as the permanent chairman. Turpie's keynote speech re-


41 Indianapolis, Indiana, Daily State Sentinel, January 9, 12, 13, 16, 19, April 19, June 6, 18, 20, July 2, 6, 1864.
flected the sentiments of the moderates. He insisted that only under a Democratic administration could the Union and the constitution be restored as they were and the armies given efficient leadership.

In the selection of state officers the moderates once again showed their power and easily selected Joseph E. McDonald for governor in preference to the peace candidate, Lambdin P. Milligan. Turpie was nominated for lieutenant-governor, but he later withdrew in favor of General Mahlon D. Manson, when he was nominated for Congress.42

In the afternoon session McDonald addressed the gathering. He officially opened the Democratic state canvass by firing a broadside at Oliver Morton. He gave a critical estimate of the Governor's administration and attacked his financial policies especially. McDonald insisted that he was a rigid believer in the check and balance system of government, and that he would never interfere with the other branches of the state government as Morton had done. He then turned to national politics and outlined the moderate Democrat policy as follows: "I am for peace at the earliest practicable moment; but peace on the terms of the restoration of the Union under the Federal Constitution with all its rights and guarantees to the several States North and South."43

The party platform was another triumph for the moderates. It opened with a scathing denunciation of Morton. "We utterly condemn as revolutionary and subversive of the Constitution of our State, the action of Governor O. P. Morton in counselling the factious and lawless conduct of the Republican members of the last General Assembly . . . . we denounce as worthy of special condemnation the conduct of Governor Morton in usurping, for personal and partisan purposes, the powers and functions of the co-ordinate departments of the government."

The platform proceeded to denounce him further for establishing a "financial bureau." The Democrats condemned the federal administration for its "crimes against civilization," its "shamelessly dishonest waste of the people's money," and for having "brought the nation to the verge of bankruptcy and general ruin." The platform then declared that the party desired the "restoration of liberty, and the

42 Ibid., July 25, August 13, 1864. McDonald had been endorsed by many Democratic county conventions.
43 Ibid., July 13, 1864.
rights of the States under that Constitution unimpaired." The Democrats also wanted an "early and honorable peace" and in conclusion they said they would maintain their personal and constitutional liberty "to the bitter end." The platform was adopted in spite of the protests of the peace men, and the convention adjourned.

The peace men were displeased with the outcome of the state convention, and they continued to keep up a steady opposition. The platform was a disappointment to the Unionists also. For weeks they had been claiming that the Democratic party was the tool of the peace men and that Dodd and his Sons of Liberty would dominate the convention and write a peace plank into the platform. The moderate-ness of the platform compelled the Unionists to change their tactics. They insisted that the convention was really dominated by the peace men who had adopted a moderate platform simply to deceive the public as to the real nature of their party. This was apparent, they said, from the fact that the platform "had not a single word to say for the Union and not a single condemnation of Jeff Davis." The Democratic National Convention at Chicago on August 29 nominated General George B. McClellan. He was extremely popular among the Indiana Democrats. The platform was a triumph for the peace men. It contained the "war failure" plank which called the war a failure and demanded an immediate cessation of hostilities. The nomination of a war candidate like McClellan was not popular with the peace men. It may have been the intention of the peace men to force McClellan to decline the nomination because of the "war failure" plank. With the popular choice out of the way they could have called another convention and nominated a man more to their liking. The General had said he would not accept the nomination if he did not approve of the platform. If the peace men hoped for McClellan's refusal, they were badly disappointed for he accepted the nomination but in his letter of acceptance completely repudiated the peace plank of the platform. Clement

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Vallandigham, the leader of the peace men, refused to support the General, and he tried to get Daniel Voorhees, the peace Democrat in Indiana, also to repudiate him. Voorhees refused to do this and in a public statement urged the peace men of Indiana to stand behind McClellan.\(^4\)

At the McClellan ratification meeting at Indianapolis the party pledged him its support. All references to his repudiation of the peace plank were conspicuous by their absence. McClellan was for peace, "but for a peace upon the basis of Union."\(^4\) This view coincided with the view of the majority of the party. Throughout 1864 the Democratic party in Indiana was to remain in control of the moderates. It was definitely a union party in the sense that its members believed in the further prosecution of the war until the Union was restored.

While the country was entering into the doldrums of despair during the summer, both parties launched their election campaigns. Early in the campaign the Indiana Democrats introduced Morton's record as a major issue. His financial policies and his usurpations of executive power were thoroughly exploited by the Democrats, and when the Governor sought to defend himself they attacked him even more. On June 25, for example, Judge Samuel E. Perkins attacked Morton in a speech at Centerville. Perkins recounted his numerous usurpations of authority and insisted that the "public treasury of the state was in the breeches pockets of Governor Morton." The Governor replied to these accusations early in July at Centerville in a speech filled with denials and invective against Perkins and his party. A few weeks later Joseph McDonald, the gubernatorial candidate, continued the attack on Morton's administration in a

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XXXVIII (1932-1933), 498-505. See also J. Lawrence to G. McClellan, August 31, 1864; L. Edgerton to G. McClellan, September 3, 1864; J. Douglas to G. McClellan, September 5, 1864, George R. McClellan MSS; S. S. Cox to M. Marble, September 10, 1864, Manton M. Marble MSS.

\(^4\) Indianapolis, Indiana, *Daily State Sentinel*, September 14, 1864. There was a meeting at Cincinnati on October 18 of the peace men. Indiana was represented by Lafe Develin. They declared that the war was unconstitutional and demanded that McClellan withdraw from the race. *Cincinnati Convention October 18, 1864, for the Organization of a Peace Party Upon State Rights, Jeffersonian Democratic Principles and for the Promotion of Peace and Independent Nominations for President and Vice President, of the United States* (n.p., n.d.).

\(^4\) Indianapolis, Indiana, *Daily State Sentinel*, September 3, 10, 19, 1864.
speech at Greencastle. Morton hurried to Greencastle the following week to give his rebuttal. Here again he tried to refute the charges by accusing McDonald of disloyalty and saying that "every open and avowed secessionist—every worshiper of Jeff Davis—every Knight of the Golden Circle, and every Son of Liberty—every Southern spy who is lurking through our borders" preferred McDonald's election. Both men finally participated in a series of debates beginning at La Porte on August 10. They held two debates in each congressional district. Public passions were running so high at the time that it was not uncommon for men in the audiences to come armed. These debates added little to the issues of the campaign, for they were usually filled with bitter appeals to the emotions of the audiences rather than to their reason. Morton repeatedly attempted to get McDonald to declare his opinion on the question of an armistice and to tell what the Democrats would do if the South rejected their offer of peace with union. Finally, McDonald was reluctantly compelled to admit that in such a situation the party would have no course but to continue the war.

The Democratic speakers also attacked Lincoln's administration as well as Morton's. They protested against emancipation, the violation of civil rights, taxation, huge debts, military losses, and aroused the sectional hatreds of the Hoosiers by constantly claiming that the war was reducing the western farmer and laborer to a status of serfdom under the eastern bondholders.

The Union press and speakers insisted that the great issue of the election was the "preservation of the Union and the quelling of the rebellion." They insisted that the victory of the Union party at the polls was as necessary to the welfare of the country as a military victory in the field. They constantly claimed that if the Democrats won the election the country would be divided and a Northwest Confederacy would be established. A campaign biography

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49 Ibid., June 26, July 22, 1864; Foulke, Life of Oliver P. Morton, I, 298-299.
50 Indianapolis, Indiana, Daily Journal, July 28, 1864. The same theme was apparent in the speech at Lawrenceburg. Foulke, Life of Oliver P. Morton, I, 303-366.
51 See the speeches reported in the Indianapolis, Indiana, Daily State Sentinel, March 17, 26, April 20, 27, May 19, 24, June 22, July 4, 6, 28, August 17, September 1, 5, 26, 30, October 3, 7, and November 3, 1864.
52 Henry Raymond to the Chairmen of the Union State Committees, July 28, 1864, Edward McPherson MSS.
of Morton was written and given wide circulation to counteract the Democrats' charges against him. The war Democrats, who were supporting Lincoln's administration, were given ample opportunity to speak in Indiana to instruct their fellow Democrats not to vote for the party of disunion but to vote for Lincoln. Several generals were also brought forward to tell how the army preferred Lincoln and later a number of men of national importance were brought into the state to speak.

Until after the Chicago convention, however, the Union canvass did not look very promising in Indiana. On the eve of the convention Schuyler Colfax, who had been making a canvass of his district, reported to Lincoln that the draft, the armed traitors, the military defeats, high prices, and the prolongation of the war were ruining their party's chances. Every effort should be made to carry the October state elections, Colfax said, for the presidential election would depend on them. He recommended that Lincoln should do three


54 Such important men as Andrew Johnson, Salmon Chase, General John A. Logan, and James A. Garfield spoke in Indiana for the Union party. See Indianapolis, Indiana, *Daily Journal*, August 16, September 16, 19, 29, October 7, 1864; J. Wright to A. Johnson, September 26, 1864; H. Maynard to A. Johnson, September 25, 1864; O. Morton to A. Johnson, September 26, 1864, Andrew Johnson MSS. Morton said that Johnson was scheduled to speak at Logansport, Fort Wayne, Tipton, Seymour, Vincennes, and Mitchell. The tour was to last six days. Morton said that the situation was so grave that he would appreciate it if Johnson would deliver a few more speeches during the period. See also A. Fletcher to A. Johnson, July 30, 1864; J. Defrees to A. Johnson, August 11, 1864; S. Colfax to A. Johnson, August 17, 1864, Andrew Johnson MSS; O. Morton to W. Dunn, August 22, 1864, Joseph Holt MSS, Library of Congress. Morton asked Dunn if Holt could come to Indiana to speak. The Democrats were not as fortunate in getting celebrities to speak in Indiana. G. Arnold to M. Marble, September 25, 1864, Manton Marble MSS; H. Seymour to G. McClellan, September 26, 1864, George McClellan MSS. Seymour said he could not come to Indiana because he felt he could do more good "by remaining in Albany than by traipsing around speaking in Indiana." Ex-President Fillmore also declined to speak in Indiana. Fillmore to H. Ketchum, September 16, 1864, George McClellan MSS. One amusing incident occurred at Plymouth, Indiana, on August 28. A crowd of Democrats were at the station to serenade McClellan who they heard was aboard the train on his way to Chicago. So as not to disappoint them the Democrats produced a colonel going home on furlough and passed him off as McClellan much to the satisfaction of the crowd. Noah Brooks, *Washington in Lincoln's Time* (New York, 1896), 182.
things to help his cause in Indiana: (1), make some formal proffer of peace to the South which Davis would have to reject; (2), arrest Harrison Dodd, the Commander of the Sons of Liberty; (3), postpone the draft which was scheduled in October for "if it is a necessity before the election, we shall all go under."55

The political situation changed after September 1. The victories at Atlanta, Mobile, and in the Shenandoah revived the confident expectation that the war was speedily drawing to a close. Such victories proved that the war and the administration were not failures as the Democrats had charged. The Chicago platform with its peace plank shocked most of the people who loved the old Union and wanted it restored. The fact that McClellan repudiated the platform in his letter of acceptance did not alter the situation. The people became hostile to a candidate and a party which seemed to be against the Union.

The Democratic platform also reunited the Union party. After the "Chicago abortion" all the malcontents hurried to pledge their loyalty to Lincoln and his fortunes began to rise.56 On September 21, Frémont bowed to the inevitable and withdrew from the race. The whole canvass in September and October hinged on the Chicago platform and its implications of surrender to the Confederacy. The Unionists claimed that such views were treasonable and that the Democratic party was filled with friends of Jeff Davis. It was not necessarily true, the Unionists said, that every Democrat was a traitor, but it was indisputable that every traitor was a Democrat.

The chief issue in the campaign now became that of domestic treason, and in the development of this issue Oliver

55 S. Colfax to Lincoln, August 29, 1864, Edwin Stanton MSS; G. Orth to E. McPherson, August 8, 1864, Edward McPherson MSS; O. Morton to W. Dunn, August 22, 1864, Joseph Holt MSS; A. Denny to J. Sherman, August 21, 1864, John Sherman MSS. Denny wrote, "I think Indiana is lost for both Lincoln and Morton. I was told at Indianapolis last week by some of Morton's best friends that it was extremely doubtful whether he could carry the state. There is a dreadful apathy prevailing in all this region [Denny was writing from Eaton, Ohio] and nearly all of Indiana."56

Morton played a decisive role. Morton had been keeping a close watch for several months on the Sons of Liberty in his state. The Sons of Liberty was an esoteric society. Most of the members were Democrats who probably joined simply because they felt it was a political club organized to advance the interests of their party. They did not feel that its activities were treasonable or dangerous to the Union in any way. It was supposed to be a quasi-military organization. The local chapters were called "castles," Dodd was the "Grand Commander," and there were "generals" and other officials with military titles. These positions existed in name only: no actual military organization was ever carried out. The membership in Indiana probably never reached more than eighteen thousand members, and most of them were inactive. Morton and General Carrington, the commander in the Indiana district, had been busy for months investigating the order in their state. Their spies and informers could never gather any evidence which proved the existence of treasonable or illegal action. This, however, did not deter Morton and Carrington. They gleaned a large quantity of what Edgar Conkling called "floating testimony." Most of it was pure hearsay, but it could be used to good purposes. Carrington turned this data over to Advocate General Joseph Holt who immediately published a lengthy report of the treasonable activities in the Northwest. The document was given wide circulation in the Union press and appeared as a Union campaign document. On July 30, Morton and Carrington published a report of their own in the Indianapolis Journal of a full revelation of the ritual, organization, and purposes of the secret society in Indiana. Here again no

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57 Benn Pitman (ed.), The Trials for Treason at Indianapolis (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1865); Mayo Fesler, "Secret Political Societies in the North during the Civil War," Indiana Magazine of History, XIV (1918), 234-236.

58 E. Conkling to J. Holt, November 7, 8, 1864, Joseph Holt MSS. Conkling made a report to Holt concerning the loyalty of General McClellan. Most of the report is composed of wild rumors. For example, Conkling reported that McClellan used to visit Lee while they were confronting each other at Antietam. Conkling's motives for gathering all these rumors are revealed in his statement, "If we get it McClellan and his associates will be politically killed tomorrow."


60 Indianapolis, Indiana, Daily Journal, July 30, August 1, 2, 1864. These revelations were made on the basis of evidence gathered by Felix Stidger. Stidger had feigned interest in the Sons of Liberty
definite conspiracy or treasonable activities could be proved except by a gross distortion of the evidence. The Union journals, however, were willing to distort the facts to prove that the Democrats were traitors.

At the time of these revelations, Dodd and his associates were busy with an absurd scheme which was to ruin their party's chances in the election and play right into the waiting hands of Oliver Morton. Dodd obtained some funds from a Confederate agent in Canada and devised a plan to liberate some prisoners, unite all the malcontents, and establish a Northwest Confederacy. The uprising was set to take place on August 16, 1864.

The plans for the uprising were revealed to Morton who immediately took the necessary precautions. At the same time Dodd revealed his plans to some of his friends who quickly realized that such a scheme would ruin the Democrats' chances in the election in Indiana and would also kill them in the national election. They forced him to abandon his plans. August 16 passed without any uprising, and the Democratic leaders breathed easier.

The party leaders had not, however, reckoned on the resourceful Governor Morton. He knew that much political capital could be made of Dodd's proposed uprising. This would be especially true if he could link it to the Democratic party and the Sons of Liberty. On August 20, Morton's men raided Dodd's office and found four hundred revolvers in boxes labeled "tracts." A large amount of his correspondence was also seized revealing that many Democratic leaders were members of the Sons of Liberty. The Union papers were quick to give the entire affair as much publicity as possible. Two days later while public sentiment was aroused Morton held a mass meeting in Indianapolis. In his speech he claimed that Dodd and his misguided associates were really tools of Jeff Davis, who having realized that the Confederacy was about to fall, was now trying to save his government by encouraging revolt in the North.61

The Chicago platform, which was issued shortly after

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the raid in Indiana, further weakened the position of the Democrats. Morton prepared to deliver another blow to his tottering opponents. He decided to arrest some of the men implicated in the August 16 conspiracy and try them for treason. General Carrington refused to arrest Dodd because of insufficient evidence. He was promptly removed by Morton and was replaced by General Alvin P. Hovey. Hovey arrested Dodd on September 3 as the latter was returning from the Chicago convention.

On September 22, Dodd went on trial. He at once pleaded not guilty to the charges of conspiracy, giving aid and comfort to the enemy, and inciting insurrection. Dodd and his counselors handled themselves well for the first few days of the trial. The prosecution was not able to prove the accusations. On the twenty-seventh, Felix Stidger took the stand. It was only then that Dodd realized that he had been confiding his thoughts to an informer. The discovery that Stidger was one of Morton's men shattered the reserve of Harrison Dodd. The informer's testimony was complete and thorough, but he at no time could definitely prove that the Democratic party was openly involved in Dodd's schemes or even that the whole affair was inherently a conspiracy.62

A steady procession of detectives, informers, spies, deserters, and renegades followed Stidger to the stand. Here again no treasonable activities could be proved. In the course of the testimony a sufficient number of the members of the Democratic party in Indiana were involved as members of the Sons of Liberty to forge a link in the public mind between the society and the party. The revelation that Clement L. Vallandigham, regarded by everyone as the chief author of the "war failure" plank in the Chicago platform, was the Commander of the Sons of Liberty was the final proof that the party and the society were linked and that both seemed to be implicated in some kind of a conspiracy. The whole trial gave the Union press all the ammunition it needed to bombard their opponents.63 Union speakers also carried the news to a waiting public, and even Judge Henry

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62 Indianapolis, Indiana, Daily Journal, September 5, 1864; Foulke, Life of Oliver P. Morton, I, 419; Pitman, The Trials for Treason at Indianapolis, 9-19, 19-37; Stidger, Treason History of the Sons of Liberty, 151-152; Indianapolis, Indiana, Daily State Sentinel, September 5, 7, 8, 20, 22, 23, 24, 26, 28, 29, October 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 1864.
L. Burnett, who was presiding at the trial, gave political harangues every evening in Indianapolis about Democratic perfidy.

There was danger that Dodd would prove to be a white elephant to Morton and the Union party. A sufficiently conclusive case could not be built against him on the basis of the evidence presented. Fortunately for Morton the prisoner conveniently escaped on October 7 and fled to Canada. No real effort was made to apprehend him. The elephant was off Morton's doorstep, and the Union press jubilantly claimed that Dodd's flight was conclusive proof of his guilt. Later the government brought proceedings against other members of the Sons of Liberty in Indiana, but these new affairs contributed nothing additional to the Union propaganda campaign which so completely attached the stigma of treason to the Democratic party.

Morton sought in other ways to assure a Union victory at the polls. He asked the government to check the migration into Indiana from the South. He felt that these people would be used to augment the Democratic vote in Indiana. He also wanted to have enough soldiers furloughed home in October to assure him a majority. Early in April, he had written to Washington on this matter. Lincoln passed this request on to William Sherman who gave it a cold reception. On July 18, editor J. Bingham, chairman of the Democratic State Central Committee, wrote to Morton that his party would like to combine with the Unionists to request the administration to send troops home for the state election. Morton promptly replied favorably to this offer and forwarded the joint request to Edwin Stanton. No action, however, was taken. In August, Schuyler Colfax wrote to William Sherman again repeating the same request, and once again the General replied in the negative. On September 12, Morton and the Indiana Union congressmen wrote to Stanton

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64 Indianapolis, Indiana, Daily Journal, October 8, 1864; Pitman, The Trials for Treason at Indianapolis, 50; Stidger, Treason History of the Sons of Liberty, 152-153; Foulke, Life of Oliver P. Morton, 1, 420-422.

65 The War of the Rebellion, Series 3, IV, 711-712; Foulke, Life of Oliver P. Morton, 1, 365-369; J. Bingham to O. Morton, July 18, 1864; Morton to “Candidates on the Democratic State Ticket,” July 25, 1864, Edwin M. Stanton MSS; Rachel S. Thorndike, The Sherman Letters (New York, 1894), 238-239; S. Colfax to John Sherman, August 2, 1864, John Sherman MSS; John in turn wrote on August 6, 1864, to his brother making the request that the soldiers be sent home. This letter is preserved in the W. T. Sherman MSS, Library of Congress.
asking that fifteen thousand soldiers be sent home at once and that the draft be delayed until after the election. Morton reminded Stanton that the outcome of the national election would probably depend on the state elections in October and that without the soldier vote Indiana would be lost. Stanton passed the request on to Lincoln who in turn wrote to Sherman telling him of the situation in Indiana. Lincoln asked Sherman to send home some troops if it could be done safely. Sherman was reluctant to spare his men during such a critical time. The best Morton could do was obtain permission to bring home only the sick and wounded soldiers. Special agents were at once dispatched from Indianapolis to round up all the disabled soldiers they possibly could. About nine thousand troops finally reached home to facilitate Morton's triumph. Since the Governor won by twenty thousand votes, all the agitation over the furloughing of soldiers was superfluous.

In regard to Morton's request that the draft should be delayed, he was completely unsuccessful. He made a personal visit to Lincoln and Stanton in Washington on this matter, but they refused him. William Sherman had told Lincoln that if the draft did not go off on schedule the troops at the front might turn on the government. The draft went into operation according to schedule, and the threats of violence and resistance failed to materialize.

On the eve of the state election the Union party leaders were confident of victory. This confidence was not misplaced for Morton was re-elected by a twenty thousand majority, the state legislature was also captured, and the Union party carried eight of the eleven congressional seats. This sparkling victory was achieved without a postponement of the draft and with far less than the fifteen thousand soldiers Morton had requested. The Democrats denounced

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*66 O. Morton to E. Stanton, September 12, 1864, Edwin Stanton MSS. A. Lincoln to W. Sherman, September 19, 1864, John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln* (2 vols., New York, 1894), II, 577-578. During the month before the state election Morton was accused by the authorities of holding back the new regiments from the front so they would be on hand to vote. He was also accused of discriminating against Democratic soldiers in the matter of permitting them to vote.

the results as completely fraudulent and predicted that McClellan would easily win in November.68

The Union campaigners did not relax for a moment. Important speakers were brought into the state. A great mass meeting was held in Indianapolis on October 14 at which Morton spoke. On the eve of the national election the new treason trials began so that the voters would be reminded just in case they had forgotten the revelations of the Dodd trial.

On November 8, Lincoln carried the state by a twenty thousand majority over McClellan. He had made some slight gains over the voting in 1860, and his party made a complete recovery after its heavy losses in the election of 1862. The October election was a complete vindication of Morton's administration, and the November election proved that Lincoln still had a real "hold on the affections and confidence of the people."69

The state elections in October had been long and bitter, but in the end the Union party emerged victorious in each of them. These triumphs were a favorable omen for the outcome of the national election in November. Lincoln was re-elected largely because of three factors: (1), the military victories at Atlanta and Mobile in September; (2), the Union party victories in the October state elections; and (3), the successful application of the charge of domestic treason to the Democratic party. Thus in the election of 1864 the role of Indiana was very important. She was one of the most critical of the October states, and Governor Morton had greatly facilitated the development of the treason issue by his attack on the Sons of Liberty and Harrison Dodd.

68 S. Chase to J. Sherman, October 2, 1864, John Sherman MSS. Chase wrote, "There is not the slightest uncertainty about the re-election of Mr. Lincoln." See also Indianapolis, Indiana, Daily Journal, October 19, 20, 1864; Indianapolis, Indiana, Daily State Sentinel, October 12, 14, 15, 17, 21, 24, 26, 1864; John Lane to G. McClellan, October 13, 1864; William Prime to G. McClellan, October 20, 1864, George B. McClellan MSS. Prime was confident that McClellan would carry New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, California, Oregon, Maryland, and Delaware. Prime said he had fair chances also in Illinois, Connecticut, Missouri, Michigan, New Hampshire, and Indiana.

69 The Tribune Almanac and Political Register for 1865 (New York, 1865), 58, gives the election results. Indianapolis, Indiana, Daily Journal, October 15, November 12, 1864.